



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

David Donaldson, ddonaldson@gsmfc.org
(228) 875-5912

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NOAA Supports Expansion of For-Hire Fishing Survey in Gulf of Mexico

For-Hire Survey Expansion: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC), and the state fishery agencies of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida are working collaboratively through the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Information Network (Gulf FIN) program to provide more timely and localized tracking of changes in charter boat fishing effort in the Gulf of Mexico that may be related to the recent oil spill. Better tracking will be made possible by substantially increasing the number of captain interviews conducted by the weekly For-Hire Survey (FHS) in each state and by producing fishing effort statistics at weekly rather than bimonthly intervals. These changes will be initiated in time to provide better tracking of fishing effort from June 1 forward.

The FHS is a telephone survey of charter boat and head boat captains that produces estimates of the number of fishing trips (effort). Captains are called weekly to provide information on the number of trips, the trip locations and the number of anglers carried. This increase in data collection will allow much more precise estimation of the total number of trips made by anglers on for-hire fishing vessels, and will also allow the production of reasonably precise fishing effort statistics at weekly intervals. Weekly tracking of changes will be useful for documenting and assessing economic impacts associated with the BP oil spill. In addition to the increased sampling, questions are being added to the survey to assess fishing trip cancellations directly related to the oil spill. Captains should be aware that they may

be contacted more frequently for trip information than they have been in the past, and that they will be asked to provide data on both fishing trips taken and cancelled fishing trips.

Expediting trip estimates: In addition, the four Gulf states and the GSMFC are working together to collect, enter and process weekly FHS data on a faster track so that NMFS can generate weekly, rather than bimonthly, effort estimates. At present, the estimates of charter and head boat (for-hire) sector fishing trips are compiled weekly and summed over a two-month sample period, or "Wave". Due to the increased sampling effort and resultant improved precision of the for-hire trip estimates, this new approach is expected to produce weekly trip estimates that can be used for near real-time tracking of the fishery. Weekly estimates of for hire fishing trips can be compared to past fishing rates based on past experience, and differences can be used to evaluate the potential for changes to fishery management actions.

How Can We Improve These Fishery Bulletins?

If you have any suggestions on how we may improve the contents of future fishery bulletins please contact:

Southeast Regional Office Communications

Phone: 727-551-5707, FAX: 727-824-5320

e-mail: sero.communications.comments@noaa.gov

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